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THE POSITION OF PERU IN SOUTH-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

BY SENOR DON MANUEL ALVAREZ CALDERON

Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Peru

There is a mistaken idea prevalent in the United States concerning the countries of Latin America. Whenever they are spoken of, it is to present them as communities living in a perpetual state of turmoil and disorder. The slightest political commotion is instantly reported as a great revolution, and not only is the offending country taken to task for thus disturbing the peace of the continent, but nine times out of ten the whole race is made responsible, while indiscriminately all of the several republics are condemned. These political commotions are becoming less frequent in the greater part of the southern hemisphere, and I feel happy to think that Peru ranks among the nations of our continent that have entered upon an era of political stability. Internal peace is to-day an accomplished fact; its blessings have brought such a change in the whole aspect of the country, that the Peruvian mind can no longer bring itself to conceive the possibility of once more returning to the old system of appealing to force and making it the supreme arbiter in the settlement of political differences. All this fortunately is a thing of the past; at present our Presidents are legally elected and the change of administration is no longer a pretext for an uprising.

But few persons have investigated the progress that Peru has attained, and but few know what security the country offers in respect to life and property, and what opportunities there are for such as would settle and make their homes there. An investigation of these facts would be of the greatest utility because it would destroy the false idea that exists generally and because it would lead to a better appreciation of a country that has ever been friendly toward the United States.

At the time of the conquest by Pizarro and his brave and adventurous Spanish followers, an ancient empire extended over the western part of South America from the Pacific Coast to the eastern slope of the Andes, having a peculiar civilization of its own, that

originated and developed without contact with European civilization. The signs of this civilization are still visible and have been the subject of research by the learned societies of the world; they are to be found in their religion and their scientific knowledge of astronomy; in the ruins of the many monuments; in the remains of the great highway along the central Andean plateau, from Quito to Cuzco, and from Cuzco to the south; in the traces of the canals and irrigation works along the coast and in the mountain slopes; in the utensils, implements and garments that were used by the natives, that attest to their knowledge of several arts; in their political and social organization, that is the source of wonderment even to this day, and is in many respects the nearest approach the world has ever seen to a community living according to socialistic ideals.

As a colony of Spain, Peru continued to occupy the same position. She was selected for the seat of the viceregal government and declared the most precious jewel in the crown of Castile. The marvellous fertility of the soil, the mineral wealth contained in the mountains and revealed by the splendor of the Inca court, and the mildness of the springlike climate, decided the conquerors to establish themselves there, and to make it the centre of their new dominions. During the three centuries of Spanish domination, Lima was the metropolis of South America, politically as likewise commercially and socially. So great was the treasure that the Spaniards obtained of this wonderful country, that the world in its astonishment, at such fabulous riches, made the name a synonym of immense wealth and thus originated the saying "worth a Peru" or "as rich as Peru" as is said in English.

Lima, our capital city, became in the colonial days the centre of all the learning, refinement and wealth in the New World, and was the first American city to be endowed with a university. In 1551 the University of San Marcos was founded, its charter being granted by Charles V. For many years it was the one seat of learning in the southern hemisphere and to it flocked the youth of the southern continent. As a graduate of that most ancient university I would ask to be allowed the privilege of suggesting, that between the University of San Marcos and the illustrious University of Pennsylvania an arrangement be made, whereby it may be possible to bring them into direct communication with each other, with the view to establishing in some manner an interchange of alumni. I venture

to think this might be of mutual advantage to the young men of both countries, as affording them an opportunity to study English here and Spanish there, while in the case of our students the possibility of acquainting themselves with the marvels of your nation, its organization and institutions, and in the case of yours acquiring a practical insight into the customs of our people, and of learning our civil and commercial laws that are substantially the same as those in practice in Porto Rico and the Philippines.

Following the example of the Anglo-Saxon colonies of North America, the South-American communities began their struggle for freedom at the dawn of the nineteenth century. As each section of the Spanish possessions was wrested from her dominion, her strength and power became concentrated in Peru, and it was in my country that the eventful battle took place that sealed forever the independence of South America, on the plain of Ayacucho, on December 9, 1824.

The relations of independent Peru with her sister republics have invariably been inspired by justice and by a broad sentiment of confraternity. On the few occasions that we have been forced into war, it is a noteworthy fact, that whenever the result favored us we did not take advantage of our position to enforce any hard conditions, but concluded peace on terms that made a perfect reconciliation immediately possible.

My country's influence has always been exerted for peace, and on more than one occasion, we have been instrumental in averting war among our neighbors. The voice of Peru has always been raised in condemnation of any unjust aggression of the strong against the weak, and emphatically of all and every attempt at aggrandizement by conquest, declaring such to be contrary to law, and a precedent that should not be established on our continent. Wherever territorial aggrandizement has been the outcome of war, there is left an open wound that is never healed. The picture of Europe divided against itself and the knowledge of the blood, tears and money that the promiscuous seizure of territory represents, should have been sufficient deterrent to our young nations not to indulge in that policy.

Peru has never refused the invitation of other nations of America to attend conferences or congresses convened for purposes of common advantage or for the end of bringing the nations into closer relationship. Thus she was represented at the first International

Congress of Panama, in 1826, at the Continental of 1856, at the first Pan-American at Washington, 1890, and again at Mexico in 1901, at Montevideo in 1889 and 1900, and she has recently been represented at the conferences held at New York on coffee and customs. She has extended her hospitality to the representatives of the sister republics on three occasions, in 1847, 1864 and 1888, when the Continental, the American and the Sanitary Congresses met in her capital city. On each and every occasion the Peruvian delegates have defended the principles of peace and harmony, strenuously fighting for the ultimate welfare of the American continent, while respecting the sovereignty of each community and their integrity of territory.

In the congresses of recent date Peru has voted in favor of compulsory arbitration because she believes that in this is to be found the essential principle that will ultimately lead to the exclusion of war as a means of settling international differences. At the last Pan-American Congress of Mexico, she signed a treaty with ten of the eighteen independent republics of free America that were represented at the close of that congress.

Faithful to her traditions she has acted up to them in every instance, both when she has had to confront a stronger power and when she has been antagonized by one that she considered weaker than herself. With this country we have had arbitrations for the settlement of claims and differences in 1841, 1862, 1863, 1868 and 1898, and the result has been that we have always maintained the most cordial relations the one with the other.

Besides those treaties we have concluded the following wherein the same principle has been established, sometimes as a general rule and at other times for special cases: with Ecuador in 1832, 1860 and 1894; with Bolivia in 1863, 1876, 1890 and 1902; with Colombia in 1829, 1858, 1870 and 1894; with the Argentine Republic in 1874, and with Chile in 1898. The latter was immediately ratified by our Congress, but unfortunately the Chilean Congress rejected it and this action has left unsolved a burning controversy between both republics, and by this course, the unjust retention of our provinces of Tacna and Arica is prolonged, contrary to the stipulations of the treaty of peace and against the manifest wish of their inhabitants.

The future of Peru lies in its commercial development and its development depends primarily on the question of rapid transporta-

tion and easy communication from and to the great markets of the world. Following this line of thought I see in the Panama Canal and in the Inter-Continental Railroad the two main factors for the accomplishment of this development. And as your country with all its wealth, all its energy and activity is at the head of both schemes I can only see success in the near future.

By wise and conservative economic measures we are putting ourselves in a position to meet new conditions. In 1897 the finances of the country were put on a solid basis and the gold standard was established. In 1890 our foreign debt was canceled and therefore not having any obligations abroad and with a balance of trade in our favor, the experiment that has failed in other nations has been a success with us. With the arrangement of the financial questions there came an era of progress and of industrial activity. Many millions of native capital have been invested within a comparatively short time in banking corporations, insurance companies, mining, agricultural and industrial enterprises, while foreign capital has entered the country to the extent of many millions also.

The exportations have grown in volume from year to year, having increased five-fold since 1884, the year after the war with Chile, and doubled since the introduction of the gold standard, while the fiscal revenues have steadily augmented, leaving a progressive surplus, which has allowed the government to dedicate more of its funds to the encouragement of education, road-making, exploration and the betterment of the nation generally.

Peru, not being a bellicose nation, has only a small but efficient army trained by experienced military instructors from France, and her reduced navy is by no means a menace to her neighbors.

The exploration of the navigable rivers of eastern Peru and the selection of the most convenient routes to connect the Pacific Ocean with the head waters of the Amazon system, has been encouraged by my government and surveys and studies of several routes have been undertaken, by native and foreign engineers, and have met with success. From their reports it would appear, that by the prolongation of some of the coast railroads into the interior it is possible to reach the Amazonian watershed, and that in some instances, by building about four hundred miles of railroad, direct communication may be established between the Amazon and the Pacific, through a country rich in agricultural and mineral productions.

The importance of this route in view of the opening of the Panama Canal is of the utmost moment as it would place the heart of South America within easy access of the markets of this country, and open up what is perhaps the richest section of the world, and what is most important to you, would open to your manufacturers this great section of territory, from whence every conceivable point of South America, in connection with its thousands of miles of navigable rivers, would be practically three thousand miles from New York, while it would be about eight thousand miles from the European markets.

The railroad system of Peru is steadily increasing. In a few months we expect to have a very important section opened which will serve to develop the richest copper district in the world, the Cerro de Pasco, that American capitalists have recently to a great extent acquired.

The projected International Railroad will run along some sixteen hundred miles of our territory. The fourteen existing railroads of Peru, run from the coast inlandwards; two of them, the Central and the Southern, cross the summit of the Andes at altitudes never before reached by any railway in the world, and are justly considered as one of the greatest engineering feats ever accomplished.

The navigation of the Peruvian part of the Amazon and its affluents is being carried on successfully, and every year a greater extension of river navigation is opened up, while new routes are constantly being explored, in connection with the rubber industry.

The wealth contained in those forests is beyond description, and I may mention in corroboration that many persons have already made fortunes gathering rubber which is found there in wonderful abundance. Cinchona and coca were discovered there. One may well wonder what other treasures may not lie still hidden in those virgin forests waiting to be wrested from nature and transformed into commodities for the benefit and use of the human race. Peru offers equal advantages to foreigners as well as natives who may desire to settle there.

A nation that contains all these wonders, that possesses all these natural advantages and has resolutely entered upon the path of progress and political stability, has a very great future in store. I believe with all my heart and soul in the ultimate prosperity of

my country. And now, Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, I wish to thank you for the kindness with which you have listened to me, and I wish to be allowed, in conclusion, to express the hope, that the friendly feeling that has prompted this annual meeting may always exist between this nation and her sister republics of Latin America, so that by cultivating it as you have done on this occasion, a better and juster appreciation of each other may follow.